



ENEMO International Election Observation Mission

2024 Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum in Moldova

INTERIM REPORT

10 September - 9 October 2024

12 October 2024

The 2024 Presidential Elections and Referendum are being held against the backdrop of crucial debates in the public sphere about the geopolitical orientation of the country. The electoral process is being managed efficiently and transparently and institutions are working intensively to improve political finance checks and enhance transparency. However, attempts to interfere in the electoral process, through voter corruption or other means pose a significant challenge not only for the current election, but also for the future of democratic developments in the country.

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova, on 10 September 2024, the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations deployed an International Election Observation Mission (EOM), to observe the Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum to be held on 20 October 2024 in Moldova.

The EOM is composed of seven Core Team experts, based in Chisinau, and six long-term observers, deployed in three teams, based in Balti, Chisinau, and Comrat, covering the entire country. Ahead of election day, eighteen short term observers will be joining the mission, which together with the long-term observers, will be forming 12 teams of two observers each, that will observe the voting, counting, and tabulation of results. The Mission is headed by Dritan Taulla.

This is ENEMO's 42nd Election Observation Mission¹ and the 7th in Moldova². The EOM's aim is to improve the transparency of the election process and assess its integrity and compatibility

¹ The 43rd Election Observation Mission of ENEMO, being conducted in parallel with this EOM, is monitoring the 2024 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia.

² ENEMO previously observed the 2016 Presidential Elections, the 2019 Parliamentary Elections, the 2019 Local Elections, the 2020 Presidential Elections, the 2021 Parliamentary Elections, and the 2023 Local Elections in Moldova. Reports of previous elections can be found on the [webpage of ENEMO](#).

with international obligations of Moldova and standards for democratic elections, as well as the domestic legislative framework. To achieve this, ENEMO observers are monitoring and assessing the overall political and electoral environment, the right to elect and stand for election, conduct of election management bodies, campaigning, gender representation, electoral dispute resolutions and other crucial aspects of the process. The EOM is paying particular attention to the fulfillment of previous recommendations of ENEMO and other international and domestic stakeholders.

This interim report is based on ENEMO's findings on the national level and throughout the regions observed from 10 September to 9 October 2024. However, developments that occurred prior to the date of deployment and that the Mission is aware of, either from interlocutors or publicly available information, are also mentioned. Since their deployment, ENEMO observers have conducted some 180 meetings with election management bodies, political parties and candidates, state institutions and high state officials,³ media, domestic civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, besides observing all CEC sessions and several campaign events.

The EOM will issue its statement of preliminary findings and conclusions after the election day and will remain in the country to observe post-election developments, including a potential second round of elections to be held on 3 November if none of the presidential candidates on the ballot will secure a majority of the votes cast in the first round.

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³ including the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament.

Executive summary

On 20 October 2024, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova will head to the polls to elect the President of the country and to vote on amending the Constitution of Moldova with the intent of strengthening the country's pro-European commitments and the strategic objective to become a member of the European Union.

Following the 2020 presidential and 2021 parliamentary elections, the presidency, executive, and legislative branches are united on a pro-reform, anti-corruption European agenda, bringing forth some advancements in this area. Acknowledging Moldova's progress in partially meeting the nine steps outlined in the European Commission's June 2022 Opinion, in December 2023 the European Council decided to open the accession negotiations with Moldova.

A new Election Code was adopted since the last 2020 Presidential Elections. The reformation process was transparent, comprehensive and inclusive, in line with a longstanding primary recommendation by ENEMO. The Electoral Code has been amended seven times since its adoption, three of which in 2024. The legal framework provides a sound basis for the conduct of elections in line with international commitments and standards.

The Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum of 20 October 2024, are managed by a three-tiered election administration, comprising the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), 37 District Electoral Councils (DECs) and some 2,219 Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs). The CEC is operating transparently and is overall managing elections in accordance with the legal requirements and deadlines. CEC sessions are open to observers and the media. The draft agenda for these sessions is being shared in advance, and the sessions are live-streamed. Additionally, decisions made by the CEC are published on its website after the sessions. Generally, the CEC enjoys the trust of political stakeholders, however, some of them have expressed reservations, especially on its composition. Most lower-level EMBs visited by ENEMO observers as of 9 October 2024 were operating efficiently and transparently, with no significant issues impacting their preparations for the upcoming presidential elections and constitutional referendum.

For the first time, Moldovan voters residing in some countries have the possibility to vote by mail, with the CEC establishing three polling stations for these voters. Additionally, the CEC established 231 polling stations for voters abroad. Some interlocutors have raised concerns about the number of polling stations in the Russian Federation, and the related decisions have also been legally challenged. The decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to staff three out of the five polling stations established in the Russian Federation lacked full transparency. Within the legal timeframe, the CEC also established 30 polling stations for voters in Transnistria.

The total number of voters registered in the State Register of Voters as of 2 October, stands at 3,302,142. Of this total, 284,755 are citizens of the Republic of Moldova who do not have a registered residence or domicile, including individuals who have officially emigrated abroad; 274,475 are citizens eligible to vote residing in Transnistria; and 20,896 citizens living abroad who pre-registered for the elections on 20 October 2024, including those registered for postal voting.

Out of the 18 requests to register an initiative group, the CEC approved 13. All candidates had to submit between 15,000 and 25,000 voter signatures from at least half of Moldova's second-level administrative units, with a minimum of 600 signatures per administrative unit. Out of the 13 registered initiative groups, 12 submitted supporting signatures and nominating documents. After verification, the CEC registered eleven presidential candidates of whom five supported by political parties, one by an electoral bloc, and five running as independents. The total number of referendum contestants stands at 15. Of these, 13 are registered to campaign for the option "YES" and two for the option "NO".

The electoral campaign was generally calm during the observed period. Campaign messages have been centered primarily on economic and social issues, including infrastructure and economic development projects. Although foreign policy and choices on the geopolitical orientation of the country are discussed prominently in the public sphere, they are not generally prioritized by the candidates during their campaign.

The legal framework for campaign finance generally aligns with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO. However, the general social and political environment in Moldova is negatively impacted by the influence of third-party actors from foreign state entities or from individuals and groups that are conducting illegal or negative economic, social and political activities against democratic institutions and rule of law. The electoral environment also suffers from these negative interventions.

Claims of many ENEMO interlocutors and media reports have recently been additionally supported by revelations from official investigations on potential serious violations of the rules on political financing, undermining the rule of law and functioning of state institutions. The findings of law enforcement authorities about potential illegal financing of some presidential candidates might have a serious impact on the electoral process. ENEMO believes that the decisions of the relevant institutions in the upcoming period should aim at upholding democratic standards, overall institutional and political stability, and sustainability of further development of democratic processes, while fully upholding the rule of law.

The media regulatory framework in Moldova, as defined by the Electoral Code, aims to provide fair and transparent coverage during election campaigns. However, legislative gaps remain, particularly in the areas of online platform ownership and oversight. Disinformation continues to be a main challenge online, including on social media. Some independent media, especially investigative media outlets, reported to the mission about being under constant cyber-attacks, while journalists were also targets of online harassment.

Considering the reporting of TV broadcasters during the campaign, according to the Audiovisual Council (AVC) monitoring report, no major violations were found in the first week of the campaign. However, several infringements related to balance in reporting and equal treatment of candidates were detected. The AVC decided not to take any sanctions against these broadcasters, and instead the Council drew their attention to the mentioned violations and urged these broadcasters not to repeat them.

Positively, the timeframe for complaints adjudication is within three days, but in every case no later than election day. In the majority of cases, the courts dismissed the challenges against the CEC, finding that the CEC acted within its legal mandate and discretion. The judiciary emphasized the importance of strict adherence to procedural and substantive legal requirements for candidate and party registrations. Generally, deadlines for adjudication were respected.

Background

On 20 October 2024, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova will head to the polls to elect the President of the country for the next four years and to decide on amending the Constitution with a perspective to enable the country's accession to the European Union.

On 16 May 2024, the Parliament adopted the decision to hold the presidential election on 20 October⁴. This decision was made, in accordance with the legal provisions.⁵ Also on 16 May, the Parliament voted to hold a republican referendum on the same day as the Presidential Elections⁶.

The Republic of Moldova is a parliamentary republic, with the legislative power vested in the unicameral Parliament comprising 101 seats. The executive power is exercised by the Government, while the President, as the head of state, holds a primarily symbolic role with specific constitutional responsibilities.⁷

The 20 October polls mark the fifth direct presidential election in the Republic of Moldova⁸ and the fifth referendum⁹ since the country declared independence in 1991. In the second round of the 2020 presidential election, Maia Sandu won the election with 57.7% of the vote against then incumbent President Igor Dodon.

Following the 2020 presidential and 2021 parliamentary elections, the presidency, executive, and legislative branches have been united on a pro-reform, anti-corruption European agenda. The authorities have initiated a comprehensive set of reforms aimed at tackling corruption, enhancing the judiciary, increasing the efficiency of local governance, and bolstering the integrity of

⁴ [Decision of the Parliament of Moldova](#) to hold the Presidential Elections on 20 October.

⁵ 60 days before the election day and 90 days before the end of the presidential mandate.

⁶ [Decision of the Parliament of Moldova](#) to hold the Constitutional Referendum.

⁷ The President of Moldova, as head of state, ensures national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as stated in Article 77 of the Constitution. The President convenes Parliament, proposes legislation, promulgates laws, appoints the Prime Minister, represents the country abroad, commands the armed forces, and may dissolve Parliament under specific conditions. Additional duties include appointing judges, granting pardons, and suspending unlawful government acts.

⁸ Direct presidential elections were held in the Republic of Moldova in 1991 and 1996, after which presidents were elected by Parliament until 2016. In 2016, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova issued Judgment No. 7, reintroducing the direct election of the president.

⁹ The first referendum in 1994 focused on independence and was successful, while the subsequent ones in 1999 and 2010 failed due to low voter participation. The fourth referendum in 2019 met the approval threshold but was not implemented.

elections, among other objectives. There were some positive developments assessed by the international organizations.¹⁰ In 2022, constitutional amendments for the judiciary took effect in April, the pre-vetting law for judicial and prosecutorial candidates was passed in March, and a new Electoral Code¹¹ was adopted in December.

Moldova gained EU candidate status on 22 June 2022. In April 2023, the European Parliament called for accession negotiations to begin by the end of the year, a commitment reaffirmed in October. On 8 November 2023, the European Commission recommended starting talks, and by mid-December, the European Council approved the opening of accession negotiations with Moldova and Ukraine. The accession talks between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union started in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022.

Since 24 February 2022, as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moldova has faced significant challenges, including an energy crisis and a surge of refugees. Inflation, also, a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, has further strained household budgets, the economy, and public finances. Additionally, Moldova has become a direct target of Russian disinformation, including false narratives regarding the war in Ukraine. The country has become a target of external cyber-attacks and falsified bomb threats. In February 2023, the government claimed to have information about Russian plans to orchestrate an overthrow of the Moldovan government.

In Autumn 2022, the Șor Party organized anti-government protests in Chisinau. On November 8, 2022, the government petitioned the Constitutional Court to remove the party, citing illegal campaign financing and Russian influence. The U.S. sanctioned oligarch Ilan Șor in October 2022 for his role in the 2014 \$1 billion bank theft, and in May 2023, the EU sanctioned him for using illegal funds to organize violent protests in 2022 and 2023. Many members of the Șor party left and joined the Șansă (Chance) Party, which registered as an electoral contestant for the 2023 local elections, emerged, but its candidates were deregistered two days before the election. Ilan Șor has now formed a political bloc called Victory-Pobeda in Moscow and is unofficially campaigning for voters to choose "No" in the Referendum on Moldova's closer alignment with the European Union.

The suggestion to hold the referendum in the fall of this year was first proposed by President Sandu and was quickly enacted by Parliament, despite requiring amendments to the Electoral Code to allow the referendum to be held on the same day as the presidential elections. These amendments were made less than a year before election day and with no consultations with other parties. The opposition viewed the ruling party's decision as an attempt by the incumbent president to mobilize greater support in the elections.

If the referendum passes, it will stipulate an amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution reconfirming the irreversibility of the European course of the Republic of Moldova and declaring

¹⁰ According to the Nation's in Transition report by Freedom House, the corruption rating improved from 2.25 to 2.50 due to law enforcement actions countering Ilan Șor's "criminal group". The Transparency International Corruption Index score increased by three points since 2022 and shows improving patterns since 2019.

¹¹ Part of the nine steps of Moldova's accession to the EU, regarding "Implementation of the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission's recommendations".

integration into the European Union as a strategic objective of the Republic of Moldova.

Legal framework and electoral system

Legal framework

Presidential elections and referendums are primarily regulated by the Constitution and the 2022 Electoral Code, supplemented by secondary legislation approved by the CEC, which is the primary institution in charge of implementing the electoral process.¹² Applicable provisions are also included in other laws.¹³ Moldova is a signatory of key international and regional documents that govern democratic standards for elections.¹⁴

Besides establishing fundamental principles and guarantees, Article 78 of the Constitution also broadly regulates the election of the President. The Electoral Code provides detailed regulations for the organization and conduct of presidential elections, including the right to elect and stand for election, responsibilities and tasks of electoral bodies, campaigning and campaign finance rules, election observation and media coverage of elections, the voting, counting and tabulation of results and mechanisms for resolving electoral disputes and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

A new Election Code was adopted since the last Presidential Elections of 2020 (in December 2022), only with the votes of the parliamentary majority.¹⁵ The electoral reform started in 2021, after the confirmation of the new composition of the CEC. A working group was established to revise the electoral legislation. During the reform process, several rounds of consultations were held, involving political parties, civil society organizations, and international partners, including ENEMO. The process was transparent, comprehensive and inclusive, in line with a longstanding primary recommendation by ENEMO.

The new Electoral Code addressed a number of previous ENEMO recommendations. Specifically, measures were introduced to enhance the transparency and stability of election management bodies, undue influence over public officials and voters, as well as potential vote-buying instances. Restrictions have been placed on misuse of administrative resources and stricter campaign finance rules have been introduced. The legal framework provides a sound basis for the conduct of elections in line with international commitments and standards.

¹² Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 1381, dated 08/12/1997, amended, “Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova”, Art. 22, Central Electoral Commission General Duties.

¹³ The Law on Political Parties, Criminal Code, Contravention Code, Code on Audiovisual Media Services, Law on Advertising, etc.

¹⁴ Inter alia, the European Convention on Human Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Convention on the Political Rights of Women; International Covenant on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), etc.

¹⁵ On 1 January 2023, the new [Electoral Code No. 325/2022](#) came into force.

The Electoral Code has been amended seven times since its adoption, three of the amendments occurred in 2024. Several amendments made in the eve of the 2023 Local Elections that aimed to limit the right to stand for election of certain political actors, were later found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.¹⁶

January 2024 amendments allow the presidential election and constitutional referendum to occur simultaneously and permit scheduling the presidential election up to 90 days before the incumbent's term ends, ensuring smoother transitions. The legislation also provides for suspending or banning political parties deemed unconstitutional.¹⁷ Campaign finance regulations have been tightened with stricter reporting obligations and greater oversight by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC).

In Gagauzia, the CEC established a temporary District Electoral Commission no. 36 following amendments to the local Electoral Code by the People's Assembly of ATU Gagauzia on December 26, 2023, which dissolved the permanent Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia. In addition, in May 2024, the Parliament enacted a law¹⁸, classified as an ordinary rather than organic law, to partially introduce postal voting for citizens in the United States, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. The implementation of the piloting of postal voting remains to be assessed. ENEMO notes that many of the amendments were adopted without support by the parliamentary opposition.

For this electoral process, the CEC has adopted six new regulations, regarding the postal voting,¹⁹ procedures in the case of suspension of voting,²⁰ voting over two number of the polling stations of

¹⁶ The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, in its [Decision No. 226a/2023](#) from March 26, 2024, declared several provisions of Electoral Code No. 325/2022 unconstitutional, particularly those concerning the ineligibility of individuals associated with parties declared unconstitutional. The Court found these provisions violated the principles of equality and presumption of innocence (see Art. 16 and 21 of the Constitution). The Venice Commission, in its [Joint Opinion CDL-AD\(2023\)031](#), highlighted that restrictions on the right to stand for election must be proportionate and justified by a legitimate aim. It further stressed the need for procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary exclusions and ensure compliance with international democratic standards.

¹⁷ According to Article 16 of the Electoral Code, this can occur when a party's actions, such as engaging in illegal activities or undermining democratic principles, threaten the constitutional order.

¹⁸ Law no. 109, dated 26.04.2024, "[Regarding the partial implementation of postal voting](#)". For the first time, Moldovan citizens living abroad can vote by correspondence, applying specific rules for this election, without incorporating these changes into the existing Electoral Code. While the law outlines postal voting procedures, amends also the Contravention Code, and introduces new provisions related to the Electoral Code. These adjustments are not codified directly within the Electoral Code but are applied in line with it.

¹⁹ Decision no. 2680 "[For the approval of the Regulation on the particularities of the organization and the implementation of postal voting](#)", from 05.04.2024.

²⁰ Decision no. 2657, "[For the approval of the Regulation on procedures in case of suspension of voting and the amendment of paragraph 76 of the Activity Regulation of the electoral bureau of the polling station, approved by the decision of the Central Electoral Commission no. 1101/2023](#)", from 30.07.2024.

voters residing in Transnistria,²¹ for polling stations established abroad,²² and for the preliminary registration of voters residing abroad,²³ while it has amended a number of existing regulations.

Electoral system

The President is elected through a two-round majoritarian system in a single nationwide constituency. The President's term of office is four years, and no person can hold more than two consecutive mandates. For the election to be valid in the first round, at least one-third of the total registered voters must participate. If this legal requirement is not met, the first election attempt is declared null by the CEC, and the election is repeated within two weeks. If the one-third voter requirement is met in the first round of the election, a candidate must secure more than half of the valid votes cast by participating voters to win.

If no candidate wins more than half of the valid votes cast in the first round, a second round is held two weeks later between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. The second round is valid if one-fifth of the registered voters participate. The candidate who receives the most votes in the second round is declared the winner and becomes the President of the Republic. The President-elect takes office within 45 days following the election.

Constitutional referendums can be initiated by at least 200,000 citizens with the right to vote,²⁴ one third of the MPs, or the government. For a referendum to be approved, it must receive a majority of the votes cast. At least one-third of the persons on the voter lists must participate for the referendum to be valid. The question to which the voters will answer in the Referendum is formulated as “Do you support the amendment of the Constitution to enable the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union?” and if adopted it will introduce changes to the preamble²⁵ and add one Chapter²⁶ to the Constitution.

²¹ Decision no. 2544 - “[For the approval of the Regulation on the establishment of polling stations for voters from localities on the left bank of the Dniester](#)”, dated 28.05.2024.

²² Decision No. 2542 - “[For the approval of the Regulation on the establishment of polling stations abroad](#)”, dated 28.05.2024.

²³ Decision No. 2513 - “[For the approval of the Regulation on preliminary registration](#)”, dated 10.05.2024.

²⁴ Signatures must be collected from at least half of the second level territorial-administrative units of the country, at least 20,000 signatures should be collected by each of the districts (Art. 141 of the Constitution).

²⁵ The Preamble shall be supplemented with two new paragraphs:

"RECONFIRMING the European identity of the people of the Republic of Moldova and the non-reversibility of the European course of the Republic of Moldova,
DECLARING European Union integration as a strategic objective of the Republic of Moldova,".

²⁶ The Constitution shall be supplemented with Chapter V, which stipulates the right of the Parliament to adopt the acts to accede to the constituent Treaties of the European Union, as well as to the acts revising the constituent Treaties of the European Union and stipulates that the provisions of the constituent Treaties of the European Union and other binding legal acts of the European Union shall take precedence over contrary provisions of domestic law, subject to the provisions of the Act of Accession."

Election Administration

The Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum of 20 October 2024 are managed by a three-tiered election administration: The Central Electoral Commission (CEC), 37²⁷ District Electoral Councils (DECs) and some 2,219²⁸ Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs). The CEC is the hierarchically superior electoral body, responsible for the organization, conduct, and oversight of elections. PEBs administer voting and counting procedures on Election Day.

While the CEC and the DECs act on a permanent basis,²⁹ PEBs are established and work only during the electoral period.³⁰

Central Electoral Commission (CEC)

The CEC is the hierarchically superior electoral body, with a 5-year mandate, which operates on a permanent basis. The current CEC,³¹ which was confirmed after the Early Parliamentary Elections of 2021, consists of nine members: one member is appointed by the President of the Republic of Moldova and the other eight members by parliamentary factions based on their representation. Of the nine CEC members, five are women, including the chairperson.

The CEC is responsible for creating and coordinating the lower level EMBs, registering initiative groups, candidates and referendum participants, compiling and distributing voter lists, aggregating election results, deciding on complaints, overseeing campaign finances, etc.

²⁷ The DECs are numbered up to 38, corresponding to the [permanently established electoral districts](#), but the CEC has only set up 37 DECs, either permanently or on an *ad hoc* basis. No DEC has been established for Bender electoral district No. 3. DEC No. 37 which covers polling stations for voters residing on the left bank of the river Nistru, is responsible for voters from the Municipality of Bender.

²⁸ Within the legal deadline, 2,221 PSs were established, of which 234 for voters abroad, including three for postal voting, and 30 for voters from the left bank of Nistru River. After [decision No. 9](#) from 25.09.2024 of DEC No.38 to establish only 231 PEBs for voters abroad, as well as the CEC [decision No. 2998](#) from 02.10.2024 to establish a polling station for hospitalized voters in Chisinau, and the DEC No.1 [decision No.20](#) from 04.10.2024 to establish the respective PEB, the total number of the established PEBs is 2,219.

²⁹ With the exception, as a general rule, of the District Electoral Councils No.37, for the localities situated on the left bank of Nistru River and No.38, established for the polling stations opened abroad, which are being established *ad hoc* by the CEC for each Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. For the Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum of 2024, the CEC had to establish *ad hoc* the DEC 36 ATU Gagauzia, by appointing the interim chairperson and other DEC members, after the termination of the permanent functioning of the CEC of ATU Gagauzia by the People's Assembly of Gagauzia.

³⁰ According to the Electoral Code, PEBs are established by the respective DECs no later than 25 days before the Election Day (i.e., no later than September 25th).

³¹ The new Electoral Code has introduced a restructured Central Electoral Commission with seven members: one appointed by the President, one by the Supreme Council of Magistracy, one by the Government (on the recommendation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), and four by Parliament (two proposed by the parliamentary majority, one by the opposition, and one from civil society organizations with expertise in the electoral field). The new structure will be implemented in 2026.

On 16 July 16, 2024, The CEC adopted the calendar³² for carrying out the actions of organizing and conducting the Presidential Elections and the Constitutional Referendum of 20 October 2024. In general, thus far, the election management bodies (EMBs) have managed to comply with the deadlines provided in this calendar.³³

Since the start of the electoral period - 1 August - until 9 October, the CEC has held 42 sessions. The mission has observed 20 of these sessions, starting from 10 September. The sessions have been conducted in a hybrid format, both in person and online.

CEC sessions were live streamed on the official CEC Facebook page³⁴ and YouTube channel³⁵ and were available even after the sessions on both platforms. The sessions were open to observers and the media. The CEC published the draft agenda for upcoming sessions³⁶ in advance. ENEMO notes that the practice of distributing draft decisions to observers, media, and other stakeholders present at the CEC premises before each session, which was a positive aspect of previous parliamentary elections, is no longer being followed. The CEC decisions have been posted in the relevant session of the CEC website³⁷ in a timely manner.

From the start of the electoral period to 9 October, the CEC has adopted a total of 280 decisions related to the Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum. Most of the decisions pertain to registration of initiative groups, presidential candidates and referendum participants, nomination of DEC members, and accreditation of observers.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is responsible for ensuring transparency and efficiency in the electoral process by publishing key documents on its website. This includes the normative framework,³⁸ information on CEC sessions,³⁹ reports on financial supervision of political parties, initiative groups and electoral campaigns, party audits, information related to elections and referendums,⁴⁰ etc.

The CEC, along with its Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CICDE), conducts nationwide voter information campaigns and offers training programs for various election stakeholders. Training sessions for PEB members were conducted in every electoral district from September 25 to October 7, 2024, with over 10,000 members receiving training.

Generally, the CEC enjoys the trust of political stakeholders, however, some of them have

³² CEC [decision No. 2633](#) of July 16, 2024.

³³ With the exception of the [registration of the Political Party “the Will of the People”](#) as a participant in the Constitutional Referendum, taken four days after their application, not according to the Article 200, (5) of the Electoral Code, as well as the CEC [decision No. 2998](#) of 02.10.2024 to establish a polling station for hospitalized voters in Chisinau, and the DEC No.1 [decision No.20](#) of 04.10.2024 to establish the respective PEB, both taken after the deadline for the establishment of Polling Stations and PEBs.

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/cecmoldova>

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/@comunicarecec/streams>

³⁶ The CEC website: [here](#)

³⁷ The CEC website: [here](#)

³⁸ Legislation, regulations, instructions and guidelines.

³⁹ Agenda, decisions and minutes of the sessions.

⁴⁰ Regarding lower level EMBs and their decisions, registration of candidates, complaints and appeals, confirmation of journalists, accreditation of observers, etc.

expressed reservations, especially on its composition.

District Electoral Councils (DECs)

The CEC establishes the permanent electoral districts,⁴¹ which as a general rule, correspond to the 32 second level administrative-territorial units of Moldova, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, and the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti. Under similar conditions, the Commission establishes two more electoral districts, for the polling stations opened abroad and for the localities situated on the left bank of the Nistru River.

Under the Electoral Code, District Electoral Councils are permanent electoral bodies that correspond to the established electoral districts. The DEC chairpersons are permanently employed, while the other DEC members are appointed *ad hoc* by the CEC for each election.

The DECs should be composed of an odd number of members, at least seven and at most eleven, of which two members are appointed by the Court within whose jurisdiction the DEC is located; two members appointed by the second-level local council, within whose jurisdiction the DEC is located; one member appointed by each political party represented in the Parliament. With the exception of DEC No. 37 which is composed of 10 members,⁴² and DECs No. 5 and No. 15 which are composed of 9 members, all the other DECs are composed of 11 members.

While as a general rule, the DECs for polling stations abroad and for localities on the left bank of the Nistru River are not permanent but are instead established on an *ad hoc* basis, the Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum in ATU Gagauzia will be administered as well by a temporary DEC.⁴³ The respective amendments⁴⁴ of the Electoral Code which enabled the temporary establishment of the DEC No. 36 by the CEC, have been made less than one year before the elections, at odds with the principle of stability of the electoral legislation provided by the Electoral Code,⁴⁵ as well as with international best practice.⁴⁶ However, ENEMO notes that they were necessary to ensure that the electoral process could be implemented in ATU Gagauzia and without them holding the elections would have been extremely challenging.

⁴¹ CEC [decision No. 904](#) of 31.01.2023

⁴² After the withdrawal of the chairperson of DEC No 37 on 16.09.2024, confirmed by the CEC [decision](#) No. 2894 of 18.09.2024, as of October 9, 2024, the DEC No. 37 is operating with 10 members and without a chairperson.

⁴³ On December 26th, 2023, the People's Assembly of Gagauzia amended the Electoral Code of ATU Gagauzia (Decree No. 5385 of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia), including the termination of the permanent functioning of the CEC of Gagauzia. As prescribed by the Electoral Code, in the event of early termination of the capacity of Chairperson or Secretary of the Central Electoral Council of Gagauzia, the nomination of the respective interim chairperson and secretary has been made by the CEC with Decision [No. 2795 of 31.08.2024](#).

⁴⁴ Art. 36 (2) 1 of the [law No. 109 of 26.04.2024](#) regarding the partial implementation of postal voting.

⁴⁵ Article 11. (1) of the [Electoral Code](#): "The electoral system and the method of constitution of electoral constituencies or electoral bodies may not be changed until at least one year before the national elections".

⁴⁶ The Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters ([CDL-AD\(2002\)023rev](#), item II.2.B) states: "The fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election, or should be written in the constitution or at a level higher than ordinary law."

The DEC's establish polling stations and Precinct Electoral Bureaus and supervise their activity, train their members, distribute the funds, provide materials and electoral documents, ensure their supply with voters' list and protocol forms, ballot papers etc. The DEC's also review complaints about decisions, actions or inactions of PEBs, assist the CEC with campaign finance oversight, tabulate the election results at the district level, and transmit the documents and electoral materials to the CEC.

The 37 DEC's consist of 402 members in total, with 286 women (71%) and 116 men (29%). This gender distribution is also reflected in the executive positions (chairpersons and secretaries), where there are 51 women (70%) and 22 men (30%).

As of 9 October 2024, the CEC has made 13 replacements in DEC's membership.⁴⁷ According to DEC representatives, these replacements have not impacted the functioning of the DEC's. However, DEC No. 37 has been operating without a chairperson since 16 September 2024, and although the absence of a chairperson and the even number of members have not hindered decision-making so far, the chairperson's role will be essential on election day, including for signing documents and processing data.

CEC decisions concerning DEC's, along with DEC decisions, are published in the designated section of the CEC website⁴⁸, with the latter also posted at DEC premises and in some of the second-level administrative units' websites.

Overall, the DEC's visited by ENEMO observers as of 9 October 2024 were operating efficiently and transparently, with no significant issues impacting their preparations.

Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs)

To conduct voting and vote counting, the Electoral Districts are divided into precincts and for each is established a polling station by the District Electoral Councils, based on proposals from town and village mayors at least 35 days before Election Day.

DEC's must establish precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs) at least 25 days prior to Election Day. PEBs must consist of an odd number of members, no fewer than five and no more than eleven members. The local council should appoint three PEB members, and each political party represented in Parliament should designate one member. ENEMO observers noted that in some instances, local councils and political parties did not submit nominations for PEB candidates to the DEC's. In these cases, the DEC's appointed members from the Register of Electoral Officials.

⁴⁷ The CEC made two replacements in each of the DEC's No. 1, No. 2, No. 32 and No. 36 and one replacement in each of the DEC's No. 8, No. 23, No. 24, No. 28, No. 34.

⁴⁸ <https://a.cec.md/ro/consiliile-electorale-de-circumscripție-16216.html>

Within the legal deadline, 2,221 PSs were established, of which 234 for voters abroad,⁴⁹ including 3 for postal voting,⁵⁰ and 30⁵¹ for voters from the left bank of Nistru river.⁵² After a decision⁵³ of the CEC to establish a polling station for hospitalized voters in Chisinau, as well as a decision⁵⁴ of DEC No. 38 regarding the establishment of PEBs for voters abroad, the total number of the established PEBs is 2,219. The decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to staff three out of the five polling stations established in the Russian Federation lacked full transparency.

The mission has been informed about several withdrawals of PEBs members,⁵⁵ mainly due to personal reasons. In most cases, replacements were made with members from the Register of Electoral Officials. Since all PEB members are required to be certified or have prior experience,⁵⁶ the CEC amended the decision regarding the 2024 training and certification plan in the electoral field⁵⁷ to offer more opportunities for interested individuals, including those nominated by political parties, to obtain certification, enabling them to serve as PEB members.

⁴⁹ 84 Polling Stations more than those established by the CEC for the Early Parliamentary Elections of 2021.

⁵⁰ Introduced in 2024 through [Law No. 109/2024](#), for the first time postal voting offers an additional option for voters abroad, to participate in elections when nearby polling stations are unavailable. This option is available in countries with the necessary infrastructure and agreements, such as USA, Canada, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Iceland. Postal voters must adhere to specific procedures established by the CEC for requesting and submitting their postal ballots.

⁵¹ 11 Polling Stations less than those established by the CEC for the Early Parliamentary Elections of 2021.

⁵² A complaint has been filed by PSRM to the Chisinau Court of Appeal and subsequently to the Supreme Court of Justice, regarding the establishment of only five polling stations in Russian Federation. Both courts rejected the complaints.

⁵³ CEC [decision No. 2998](#) of 02.10.2024 to establish a polling station for hospitalized voters in Chisinau.

⁵⁴ With its [decision](#) No. 9 of 25.09.2024, the DEC No. 38 established only 231 polling stations for voters abroad. The DEC No. 38 did not establish PEBs 38/196, 38/197, and 38/198 in Russian Federation, because the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs withdrew its candidate proposals for these PEBs, as the Moldovan Embassy in Russia could not fully meet SIS standards and requirements for conducting elections in Russia, except at the Embassy premises. A [complaint](#) regarding the DEC No. 38 decision has been submitted to the CEC by PSRM. The CEC [examined and partially upheld](#) the complaint submitted by PSRM, requesting, the establishment of PEBs for polling stations in Russia (No. 38/196, 38/197, 38/198), despite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' withdrawal of candidate proposals, and affirmed the legality of its prior decision (No. 2866/2024) regarding the organization of voting abroad, including in Russia, for the upcoming 2024 elections. Subsequently, the DEC No.38 with its [decision](#) No. 17 of 03.10.2024, decided that it was impossible to establish the 3 PEBs in Russia, as the MAE maintained their initial position. Consequently, the CEC with its [decision](#) No. 3022 of 07.10.2024 declared it impossible to proceed with setting up these PEBs, and ordered the destruction of 13,000 ballots printed for these stations, acknowledging the inability to ensure safe and functional voting in those regions. On October 8th, the PSRM filed a [prejudicial complaint](#) to the CEC regarding their decision No. 3022 of 07.10.2024. As of October 9, the CEC has not considered the PSRM complaint.

⁵⁵ On average, 10% of the total number of members of PEBs in each district visited by ENEMO observers.

⁵⁶ According to art. 245 (5) of the Electoral Code, persons who are entered in the register of electoral officials on the date of entry into force of the Code shall be regarded as ex officio certified, with qualification certificates valid for 2 years. The subsequent certification of these persons shall be made on the basis of the general rules.

⁵⁷ The CEC [decision](#) No. 2910 of 19.09.2024 amended the [annex](#) to CEC [decision](#) No. 2243/2024 "Regarding the approval of the Plan for the organization and implementation of training/specialization certification in the electoral field in the 2024 session".

Registration of voters

Moldovan citizens who are at least 18 years of age on election day have the right to vote, except those deprived of this right by a court ruling establishing the measure of judicial protection.⁵⁸ Voter registration is passive; citizens are automatically included on the voter list based on data from the State Population Register. The voter lists are compiled by the CEC and manages the State Register of Voters.⁵⁹ For the compilation and verification of the Voters' Lists, the CEC cooperates with relevant central and local institutions, such as the Public Service Agency⁶⁰ and Local Public Authorities.⁶¹

As of 2 October 2024, the total number of voters registered in the State Register of Voters is 3,302,142. Of these 2,722,016 citizens with the right to vote are assigned to one of the second level administrative units.⁶² The difference includes citizens of the Republic of Moldova without registered residence or domicile, including those who have officially emigrated abroad (284,755 individuals), citizens eligible to vote with registered domiciles in the administrative-territorial units in the left bank of Nistru River (274,475), and citizens abroad who pre-registered for the 20 October elections, including those opting for postal voting (20,896).

Voters residing in Transnistria and those without a registered domicile or residence are not included in the main voters list and will be recorded in the supplementary voter list on Election Day. Students and pupils eligible to vote, without a domicile or temporary residence in their study locality can vote at any polling station there, provided they present their identity document and student card from their educational institution.⁶³ Voters that change their residence or will be away from their registered address on Election Day, can request an absentee voting certificate from their designated PEB.⁶⁴

Voters unable to reach their local polling station due to health or other valid reasons can request to vote with a mobile ballot box.⁶⁵ Voting with a mobile ballot box is designated also for individuals detained under an arrest order awaiting trial, those sentenced to prison with non-final

⁵⁸ Electoral Code, Article 14.

⁵⁹ A single integrated information system designed to collect, store, update and review the data on the Moldovan citizens who have the right to vote.

⁶⁰ Maintains the State Population Register, which serves as the source for data extracted for the State Register of Voters.

⁶¹ Local public authorities assist in updating and verifying voter lists, including addressing the issue of undeclared deceased citizens, by adding a note (declared as deceased) for individuals reported as deceased by relatives, based on valid documents such as foreign death certificates not yet transcribed.

⁶² Thirty-two districts, 2 municipalities and A.T.U. Gagauzia

⁶³ https://a.cec.md/ro/cec-face-unele-precizari-privind-participarea-la-alegerile-din-2781_111533.html

⁶⁴ Electoral Code, Art. 61 (7)

⁶⁵ According to Art. 80 (4) of the Electoral Code, by submitting a written request starting from two weeks before election day until 2:00 p.m. the day prior. [According to the CEC](#), individuals unable to submit their voting application in person may do so through a family member or a social worker, and if they cannot sign the application due to a physical disability or illness, they can submit it verbally at the polling station or by telephone if in-person submission is not possible. On election day, applications are approved by the PEB until 2:00 p.m. only if a medical certificate is presented.

sentences, individuals under arrest for contraventions, and those with final prison sentences located in penitentiaries.⁶⁶

Starting 1 October 2024, voters could verify the accuracy of the voter list at their polling station⁶⁷ or online⁶⁸ as well as check their polling station details for the upcoming election on October 20, 2024. Additionally, from that date, voters may request their PEBs to be included or excluded from the voter list or to correct registration errors, provided they present supporting documents.⁶⁹

The centralized State Population Register typically ensures the reliability of voter lists; however, some ENEMO interlocutors expressed concerns about deceased voters remaining on the lists due to data update delays. On the other hand, CEC representatives claim that they address these issues through regular updates and collaboration with other state institutions.

Registration of presidential candidates and referendum participants

Registration of candidates for President

The right to stand for presidential elections is granted to Moldovan citizens who are eligible to vote, are at least 40 years of age, have lived in Moldova for a minimum of 10 years, are proficient in Romanian language,⁷⁰ and hold a higher education degree.⁷¹ The residency requirement is excessive and at odds with international standards.⁷²

Active-duty military personnel, persons sentenced to prison by a final court decision, those with active criminal records for intentional crimes, and persons deprived of the right to hold public positions by a final court decision cannot stand for election.

Presidential candidate's nomination begins 60 days and ends 30 days before election day. Candidates can be nominated by political parties, electoral blocs, or by a group of voters. An initiative group, consisting of a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 100 eligible voters, must be

⁶⁶ Electoral Code, Art. 80 (5)

⁶⁷ According to the article 62 (1) Electoral Code, voter lists should be made available for public scrutiny no later than 20 days before Election Day.

⁶⁸ <https://verifica.cec.md/>

⁶⁹ Requests for changes should be made at least seven days before election day, and the PEB should promptly communicate these changes to the registrars in Local Public Administration, who should verify the data and update the State Register of Voters as necessary.

⁷⁰ The proficiency in Romanian language should be verified by the CEC, in accordance with Article 18 of the [Law on Citizenship](#).

⁷¹ Graduated with a bachelor's degree or equivalent.

⁷² According to the [Venice Commissions' Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#), Guidelines on Elections, item I, 1, 1.1, c), Residence: "iii. a length of residence requirement may be imposed on nationals solely for local or regional elections; iv. the requisite period of residence should not exceed six months; a longer period may be required only to protect national minorities; v. the right to vote and to be elected may be accorded to citizens residing abroad."

formed to support the nomination. Out of the 18 requests to register an initiative group, the CEC approved 13.⁷³

To be registered by the Central Electoral Commission, all candidates must submit between 15,000 and 25,000 voter signatures from at least half of Moldova's second-level administrative units, with a minimum of 600 signatures per administrative unit. The number of signatures required is in line with the international standards.⁷⁴ For the first time, in these presidential elections, voters could sign in support of more than one candidate, as previously recommended by ENEMO.⁷⁵

Of the thirteen registered initiative groups, twelve⁷⁶ submitted supporting signatures lists and other nominating documents. After the verification process of supporting signatures, the CEC decided to register⁷⁷ eleven candidates.⁷⁸ Out of the registered candidates, five are supported by political parties, one by an electoral bloc, and five candidates are running as independents.

The CEC ranked the eleven candidates on the ballot according to the date they submitted their supporting signature lists and nomination documents. In cases where two or more candidates submitted their documents on the same day, their ranking was determined by a draw.

Registration of contestants for the Referendum

After the Central Electoral Commission publishes the list of political parties eligible to participate in the Referendum based on data from the Public Services Agency, political parties and electoral

⁷³ The CEC rejected the registration of initiative groups supporting: [Valeriu Plesca](#), due to his position at the time of submission as president of a different political party, the "Christian-Social Union of Moldova", which violated constitutional court principles prohibiting camouflaged electoral blocs; [Ludmila Corsun](#), because she failed to meet the Romanian language proficiency requirement, as established by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and the Electoral Code, which was confirmed during her evaluation by the CEC; [Vasile Bolea](#), due to contradicts between the applicant's statements, and the fact that he is the Renaissance Party chairperson and the publicly declared candidate of the Political Party "Renaissance", the Political Party "CHANCE", the Political Party "Alternative and Salvation Force of Moldova" and the Political Party "VICTORIE", which had the intention of forming a bloc; [Vasile Tarlev](#), due to his status as president of the "Party for the Future of Moldova" that was deemed incompatible with his claim of being an independent candidate, which violates the legal requirement for genuine independence from political parties. Mr. Tarlev's initiative group was registered with a second decision by the CEC, as nominated by the [Political Party for the Future of Moldova](#). Two decisions to register initiative groups were rejected due to lack of votes of CEC members: of Valentin Borodachi, a member of political party PACE, and of Aurel Tabarcea, for engagement in activities of the political party "Chance".

⁷⁴ As per the [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#), the number of signatures should be lower than 1% of the voters in the constituency concerned.

⁷⁵ Several ENEMO EOMs recommended amending the law to allow voters to support more than one candidate during the signature collection process, as the restriction to sign for only one candidate was seen as unjustified and limiting citizens' freedom of choice.

⁷⁶ The initiative group supporting Alexandru Arseni did not submit supporting signatures and nominating documents.

⁷⁷ [Igor Munteanu's](#) candidacy for President of the Republic of Moldova was rejected because the number of valid signatures collected fell below the minimum legal requirement of 15,000, and signatures were valid in fewer than half of the required administrative-territorial units.

⁷⁸ Alexandr Stoianoglo, "Party of Socialists from the Republic of Moldova"; Maia Sandu, "Action and Solidarity Party"; Renato Usatii, "Our Party"; Vasile Tarlev, "Party for the Future of Moldova"; Irina Vlah, Independent Candidate; Ion Chicu, "Party of Development and Consolidation of Moldova"; Andrei Nastase, Independent Candidate; Octavian ȚICU, "Together" Electoral Bloc; Victoria Furtuna, Independent candidate; Tudor Ulianovschi, Independent Candidate; Natalia Morari, independent candidates.

blocs must submit their registration applications to the CEC. This must occur no earlier than 60 days and no later than 30 days before the Referendum date. Within their registration application, the parties should declare whether they support the “Yes” or “No” option in the referendum.

Within the deadline, 19 political parties and electoral blocs applied to register as Referendum contestants. Of these, the CEC registered 16.⁷⁹ After the de-registration of Chance party,⁸⁰ the total number of referendum contestants is 15.⁸¹ Of these, the registration of Political Party “The Will of the People”⁸² as a participant in the Constitutional Referendum, taken four days after their application, is contrary to the Article 200, (5) of the Electoral Code.

Electoral Campaign and Campaign Finance

Campaign

The right to campaign is granted to political parties and electoral blocs that have been registered by the CEC, in accordance with the Electoral Code; 11 presidential candidates registered⁸³ for the election campaign and 15 parties/bloc registered⁸⁴ to campaign for the Referendum.

Electoral campaigning, along with the rights and obligations of electoral competitors, is governed by several laws, including Chapter VIII of the 2022 Electoral Code, the 2002 Criminal Code, the 2008 Contravention Code, the 2022 Law on Advertising, and the CEC regulations.

According to the provisions of art.70 (3) of the Electoral Code, the electoral campaign officially begins upon the registration of the candidate or electoral competitor, but no earlier than 30 days

⁷⁹ The "[VICTORIE](#)" Political Party was not registered as a referendum contestant because it failed to provide the requested documentation by the deadlines, and its actions were deemed an attempt to form a "camouflaged" electoral bloc, violating transparency and legality in the electoral process; the political party "[PACE](#)" was not registered as a referendum contestant because the decision to participate was made by a party body that lacked the proper authority according to its own statute, and the party failed to provide the necessary documents to clarify this issue within the established deadlines; The electoral bloc "[Victorie - Победа](#)" was not registered as a referendum contestant because it failed to address identified deficiencies in its application, particularly regarding the use of a name that is considered identical to an existing political party, which violated regulations set by the Central Electoral Commission.

⁸⁰ The CEC deregistered the [Chance](#) party as a referendum contestant because the party's activity was limited for three months by a court decision due to violations related to its financial obligations, making it ineligible to participate in the upcoming referendum.

⁸¹ In total 14 Parties: Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; Green Ecologist Party; Miscarea Respect Moldova; Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; Renaissance Party; The Coalition for Unity and Welfare; Party of Action and Solidarity; National Alternative Movement; Democracy at Home; Alliance For The Union Of Romanians; Party of National Reunification "ACASĂ"; European Social Democratic Party; The Will of the People, and one electoral bloc: "Together" Electoral Bloc. While Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova and Renaissance are registered in support of the option “NO”, the other 13 contestants are registered for the option “YES.”

⁸² Decision no. 2945 “[regarding the application for registration of the Political Party "The Will of the People" as a participant in the constitutional republican referendum from October 20, 2024](#)”, dated 24.09.2024

⁸³ See the [CEC webpage](#)

⁸⁴ See the [CEC webpage](#)

before the election day. The campaign started officially on 20 September, and it will be conducted until Friday before Election Day, 18 October. Exceptionally, campaigns could be finished prior to this date if and when some of the candidate's registration is canceled.

Art. 63 (1) states that for presidential elections, the nomination process starts 60 days before election day and must be completed 30 days before the election day, further contributing to this overlap.⁸⁵ Thus the start of the campaign overlaps with the deadline for submitting signatures (20 September in this election). As a consequence, some candidates started campaigning later than others, as late as 29 September.

During the campaign, competitors are prohibited from organizing concerts, competitions, or other events featuring domestic or foreign performers, as well as displaying slogans, messages, or distributing materials containing the competitor's symbols or other identifiers during such events⁸⁶. Additionally, competitors may not participate in these events for political promotion purposes.

The use of imagery linked to religious cults, foreign officials, state institutions or authorities from other countries, international organizations, and symbols of political parties declared unconstitutional is also strictly prohibited. Moreover, the campaign must not feature symbols of foreign states, historical figures, or any images that promote defamation of the state, incite war, aggression, national or racial hatred, discrimination, territorial separatism, public violence, or pose a threat to the constitutional order.

Having in mind concrete campaign activities, it is forbidden to organize voter transportation to polling station on the Elections Day for the purpose of determining them to exercise their electoral rights or the organization of transportation of voters to the polling station, during the electoral period.⁸⁷ Candidates are also prohibited from using administrative resources, including launching or participating in infrastructure projects or public procurement activities funded by the national budget, or utilizing public equipment, means, and goods during the electoral period. These measures aim to prevent the misuse of public resources in the campaign. In that context, if public officials are taking an active role in campaigning for the candidates, they are required to suspend their official duties during the campaign, with the exception of the Chairman of the Parliament, Prime Minister and the President of Moldova.

The electoral campaign was generally calm during the observed period. Candidates mainly focused on traditional media, TV and radio campaigns, as well as on campaigning on social media platforms, distributing campaign materials, holding small meetings with voters and employees and conducting door-to-door canvassing. The most visible activities are those of Maia Sandu, Alexandr Stoianoglo, Renato Usatii, and to some extent Irina Vlah.⁸⁸ The Mission is aware of a few

⁸⁵ ENEMO has previously raised similar concerns about the overlap between the candidate registration deadline and the start of the campaign in Moldova. Candidates that are registered earlier can start campaigning before others, creating an uneven playing field.

⁸⁶ Electoral Code of Moldova, Article 70 (13)

⁸⁷ Electoral Code of Moldova, Article 70 (5)

⁸⁸ The last mainly reported to be campaigning in regions of the North and South.

scheduled debates, but not all invited candidates attended all of them, turning some into interviews with one present candidate.

A significant part of presidential candidates' campaign messages have been centered primarily on economic and social issues, including infrastructure and economic development projects, such as industrialization, public works on road infrastructure, various diaspora related issues, youth mobility, education, job creation, energy supplies (including diversification of energy sources), where the EU was mostly mentioned by the ruling party candidate through achievements and concrete results of financial EU aid to various infrastructure projects within the country.

Although foreign policy issues topics and future choices on geopolitical orientation of the country are constantly being discussed in the public space and the Referendum of 20 October is being held specifically on those topics, they are not very prominent in talking points of presidential candidates.

The ruling party candidate, Ms. Maja Sandu often uses pro-EU narratives during campaigning. On the other side, opposition candidates are unified on strong criticism of Ms. Sandu and ruling structures, but they differ in their attitude towards the prospects of EU membership. Namely, some of them support Moldova's EU accession, while others generally support the idea of a balanced approach towards the EU and partnership with Russia or a neutral position.

The campaign "Europe for You"⁸⁹ which started in July 2024 and officially ended on 18 August is still visible on most of the Governmental web pages in parallel with the campaigning for the referendum. High-ranking state officials, including ministers and the Prime Minister have actively participated in a line of public events (mostly meetings with citizens at official visits to some locations) as the campaign for referendum is also unfolding.⁹⁰

Besides the officially registered candidates for the presidential race and parties campaigning for the referendum, the mission has observed activities of third parties that are not registered, but which are still undertaking activities that promote messages relevant to the referendum and the presidential campaign. There are no legal provisions regulating third party campaigning in Moldova. In addition, the legislation also remains unclear regarding what activities are legally permitted before the official campaign period begins.

The most important impact of third parties on electoral and referendum campaigns can be found in the network created by runaway businessman Ilan Shor, whose activities are trying consistently to undermine the stability of the electoral and law enforcement institutions through massive vote buying schemes, which are actively investigated by the authorities. One of these attempts consisted in a video address on the Telegram platform, where Ilan Shor invited citizens to join his network for 500 LEI, and that after successfully voting he would pay them an additional 500 LEI in return.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Government of Moldova. see the [link](#).

⁹⁰ According to the Code on Good Practice on Referendums of the Venice Commission "Administrative authorities must observe throughout the campaign period their duty of neutrality (see I.2.2.a. above), which is one of the means of ensuring that voters can form an opinion freely."
[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2022\)015-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2022)015-e)

⁹¹ The video and the respective Telegram Channel seem to be blocked by Telegram as of 10 October 2024 for violating local laws.

The mission has noticed a number of Facebook pages paying for advertising on the Meta platform (Facebook and Instagram), although they do not represent any of the registered contestants. While Meta has been deleting a number of these pages and seems to keep doing so on a regular basis, new ones are created as regularly.⁹²

At a press conference held on 3 October, the Head of the General Police Inspectorate, Mr. Viorel Cernateanu, and the Head of the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, Ms. Veronica Dragalin, presented the results of a criminal investigation regarding schemes for illegal financing and vote buying.⁹³ At this moment the investigation is still ongoing, and there were public announcements from the General Police Inspectorate that several registered presidential election candidates might be benefiting from this scheme. The police announced that all the evidence had been transferred to the CEC. According to existing legislation, this might lead towards deregistration of some candidates from the presidential race by the CEC. The Mission will continue following the case closely.⁹⁴

The EOM was also informed by a number of interlocutors about representatives of certain religious cults' involvement in the electoral campaign, with members of the clergy of religious cults campaigning by using political messages regarding elections and the referendum during their official and unofficial activities. In 2016, the Constitutional Court ruled that the participation of religious cults in elections violates the Constitution.⁹⁵

Several interlocutors of the Mission mentioned allegations of pressure on employees and the misuse of administrative resources, which is cause for concern.

The specific nature of this electoral cycle is that the electoral campaign goes in parallel with the Referendum campaign. Namely, after changes of the legislation in January 2024, the decision has been made that the Referendum on constitutional issues related to EU membership will be held in parallel to Presidential Elections. Since these two matters are separate legal activities, according to the Law, the campaign for Elections and campaign for Referendum must be separated. This includes separate funds and accounts. Two parties, PAS and Electoral Bloc "Together", have potential to gain additional benefits from double campaigning, since they are the only ones registered both for referendum and presidential election campaigning. The reason for this is that the division of these two campaigns may represent a challenge both for these parties and for the institutions in charge.

⁹²The video material of Ilan Shor <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pkBLtnB-ZY>.

⁹³ The entire scheme was organized through payments to a network of 130 coordinators and 130.000 citizens of Moldova, who were receiving approximately 100 EURO on their accounts through the application of Russian owned PSB bank (Promsvyazbank), in return for voting for a certain candidate and voting "No" in the referendum. The entire scheme discovered was worth approximately 15 million USD, with 130 coordinators receiving 45 thousand LEI on a monthly basis. See [here](#).

⁹⁴ Following this information, it should also be emphasized that in April 2024, the authorities of the Autonomous Region of Gagauzia have signed an official agreement with the same PSB bank on the creation of a scheme of cards distributed to pensioners and public officials of Gagauzia. It has been announced that through these channels and e-banking, all beneficiaries of the PSB cards will receive around 2,000 LEI (paid in Russian rubles) on a monthly basis.

⁹⁵ Constitutional Court, Decision of the Constitutional Court nr. 28g / 2016 on the violation of the right of religious freedom and gender equality. see [here](#).

Both the CEC and Audiovisual Council have confirmed to ENEMO's mission that special attention is dedicated to monitoring the eventual overlap of two campaigns for Presidential candidates not registered for the Referendum, both in media and campaign activities. In accordance with that, some exemptions have been made for media, where one third of time in discussion shows on TV or radio could be dedicated to discussing EU and foreign policy issues, which might overlap with the referendum, by the candidates or their representatives.

Campaign Finance

Campaign finance is regulated by Chapter V of the Electoral Code, the 2007 Law on Political Parties, the 2002 Criminal Code, the 2008 Contravention Code, and the 2022 Law on Advertising. These legal provisions are further developed within the CEC regulations, including the Regulation on Financing of Political Parties and Regulation on the Financing of Initiative Groups and Electoral Campaigns, adopted in August 2023.

Since the last presidential elections, and especially with the adoption of the new Electoral Code in 2022, significant changes were made to the legal framework governing campaign finance, aiming to align it more closely with international standards and recommendations from the Venice Commission, the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), and both international and domestic observers. Some of these new provisions brought stricter oversight of donor incomes, clearer instructions on financial reporting, and more detailed guidelines for the CEC's control and supervision of campaign financing.

Electoral competitors in the presidential elections are required to open a dedicated bank account, known as the "Electoral Fund," within three days of their registration and notify the CEC within 24 hours. Transfers from the Fund can only occur after the candidate's registration, but no earlier than 30 days before the Election Day. According to the CEC and mission interlocutors, several presidential candidates experienced difficulties in opening this bank account.

These difficulties were related to administrative procedures and documentation issues, along with the reluctance of private banks to deal with opening such specific electoral accounts. According to interlocutors, the banks rather avoid opening accounts that are submitted to such strict control, complicated administrative procedures, and a regular and strict reporting. Additionally, this further burdens the bank administration's work, with limited benefits for them.

Electoral contestants in the presidential race are required to appoint a person responsible for managing their campaign account, often referred to as the treasurer. All campaign-related finances must be handled through the "Electoral Fund." The bank provides the CEC with daily electronic reports on all transactions, while competitors must submit an initial financial report within three days of opening the account, followed by weekly reports via the CEC's electronic "Financial Control" module. Independent candidates may require additional assistance from the CEC regarding reporting and other administrative issues. The final financial report is due within three days after Election Day. The CEC is required to publish all reports within 24 hours of receiving them. According to the CEC, no major delays or infringements in financial reporting were mentioned as of publication of this report.

On the other hand, several ENEMO interlocutors among electoral contestants expressed concerns that the enhanced financial reporting requirements are burdensome and time consuming, especially for smaller parties and independent presidential candidates who do not have professional party infrastructure.

Candidates can finance their campaigns using their own funds, but also through transfer of money from their party accounts (which may include state budget subventions), membership fees, donations, or zero-interest loans. In-kind donations, free services, and voluntary activities must be reported in financial reports at their market value, while cash donations must be deposited directly into the "Electoral Fund." Citizens can donate to one or more electoral contestants, with donations limited to six average monthly wages or no more than 30 percent of their annual income from the previous year (capped at 13,700 x 6 months, in total 82,200 MDL). In case of public servants, public officials, officials with special status or employees in public organizations that are subject to Law No. 133/2016 on declaration of personal assets, they can donate only up to 10% of their annual income, but no more than six average monthly wages for that year. Legal entities can donate up to twelve average monthly wages (capped at 164,400 MDL for 2024).^{96 97}

The CEC is the primary body responsible for receiving, overseeing, and controlling financial reports on electoral campaign financing. Besides that, the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office and the National Anti-Corruption Centre are in charge of different aspects of the financial control over electoral processes.

In cases of non-compliance with campaign finance regulations, the CEC has several enforcement measures at its disposal. These range from issuing warnings, suspending free or paid airtime for 24 or 48 hours, and depriving candidates of state budget funds, to more severe penalties like contravention sanctions and as the most severe measure, de-registration of the electoral contestant. The CEC is required to announce the results of its overall control of campaign finance within six months after the confirmation of election results.

In May 2021, the Supreme Security Council, an advisory body to the President of Moldova, recommended that the CEC should establish an inter-agency working group,⁹⁸ to detect and investigate illegal campaign financing. This recommendation was put in practice during the 2023 local elections, and it was re-established during this presidential electoral cycle. According to the

⁹⁶ Additional restrictions apply to various categories of donors and certain social entities are prohibited from financing election campaigns, including Moldovan citizens under 18 or under guardianship, foreign legal entities, non-citizens, anonymous donors, those acting on behalf of third parties, legal entities that have concluded public contracts in the last three years or received state aid, public institutions funded from the public budget, non-commercial organizations, trade unions, associations, foundations, charitable and religious organizations, as well as foreign states or international political organizations. The CEC may request further financial information from citizens to verify the legitimacy of their donations and prevent illegal funding. However, some opposition parties have expressed concerns that these thorough financial checks may discourage citizens from making donations.

⁹⁷ The CEC sets a maximum limit on the financial resources that can be transferred to the "Electoral Fund" account, which is capped at 0.1 percent of the state budget for the year. This general ceiling at the national level of the financial means that could be used by the electoral contestants in Presidential elections in Moldova in October 2024 is established in the amount of 65,830,540.00 lei.

⁹⁸ Consisting of representatives of the CEC, National Inspectorate of Police, Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, National Anticorruption Centre, Public Service Agency, The Service for Information Technology and Cyber Security (STISC), Service for Information and security (SIS) and other relevant bodies.

CEC, the Working Group did not have an official session during these elections, but their competences were put in practice through direct communication of its members in cases where this inter-agency cooperation is needed.

In July 2022, the CEC created a new Division of Supervision and Control of the Financing of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns. However, this division is facing challenges in terms of staffing. Following the Venice Commission's recommendations, oversight of state subsidies for political parties has been assigned to the Court of Accounts. Even though the bulk of the work is performed in an efficient and timely manner according to CEC officials, the effectiveness of these campaign finance oversight mechanisms is yet to be evaluated for this election.

The legal framework for campaign finance generally aligns with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO. However, the general social and political situation in Moldova is deeply burdened by the influence of third parties, whether these negative influences are coming from other state entities or from individuals and groups that are conducting illegal or negative economic, social and political activities against democratic institutions and rule of law in Moldova.

As a result, the electoral atmosphere suffers from such activities, as claimed by many ENEMO interlocutors who raised concerns about the risks of "shadow funding" in electoral campaigns, particularly from foreign sources and through illegal groups and individuals. They claimed that these funds often come in the form of cash, prepaid cards, crypto currencies, or direct bank transfer through electronic payments.

According to certain higher officials, Moldovan institutions still lack capacities and resources for efficient fighting and timely prevention of many of these illegal and anti-institutional efforts of "third parties". However, various Moldovan public entities are investing significant efforts to increase the transparency of financing of the electoral and political processes in general and to prevent consequences of these illegal actions (see Campaign section above).

Besides detailed monitoring of the spending of registered candidates and their campaign teams by several state institutions, civil society representatives are also monitoring and comparing the spending within the electoral cycle. According to the report of civil society organization Promo-Lex, some candidates are underreporting their overall spending during the electoral campaign for presidential elections, which is cause for concern.⁹⁹

Media

The right to information is guaranteed by the Constitution¹⁰⁰ of Moldova, and the country is also a signatory to international conventions, including those of the Council of Europe, which protect

⁹⁹ These claims should be compared to reports of the CEC and more details on this subject can be found in the report of Promo-Lex organization at following [pages](#):

¹⁰⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, art. 34. See [here](#).

fundamental rights essential to the media. The coverage of the election campaign and campaign for the referendum in the audio-visual media space are regulated through the Electoral Code (art. 89-90) and respective CEC regulation.¹⁰¹ The Electoral Code stipulates that all contestants should have equal access to political advertising. The Electoral Code outlines the principles for media coverage of elections¹⁰², ensuring media organizations' right to report without interference and granting accredited journalists access to electoral processes equal to that of observers, without special permits for general election coverage. Parties and candidates are allotted limited free airtime¹⁰³ on national broadcasters. Contestants are also allowed a maximum of 2 minutes per day for paid advertisements. Online media is mainly beyond the regulation.

Until recently, television was considered as the most dominant and trusted medium in Moldova; However, in the past years the share of citizens who receive information from the internet news media and social media is rapidly increasing.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the internet penetration and active mobile internet usage is constantly growing.¹⁰⁵

In total, there are 59 TV channels (40 with national coverage) and 61 radio stations (six with national coverage) operating in the country.¹⁰⁶ 19 nation-wide TV stations and one regional television (GRT), and 13 radio stations are registered for organizing electoral debates during the campaign period.¹⁰⁷

Since the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Moldovan authorities have implemented measures to limit the rebroadcasting of audiovisual media outlets¹⁰⁸ and several websites¹⁰⁹ involved in disseminating disinformation about war in Ukraine and posing a national security risk. In 2024, Moldova ranks 31 among 180 countries accessed by the World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and is evaluated as "satisfactory". Media representatives, particularly investigative journalists, as reported to the mission are targets of cyber-harassment, and independent media outlets are constantly subjected to cyber-attacks. Before the start of the electoral campaigning period, the Audiovisual Council sanctioned¹¹⁰ the radio and television broadcaster GRT for repeatedly violating the provisions on ensuring correct information, as provided by art. 13 of the Audiovisual Media Services Code (CSMA).

¹⁰¹ CEC (2024) Decision No. 2660 - regarding the particularities of media coverage of the elections for the position of President of the Republic of Moldova and the republican constitutional referendum of October 20, 2024.

¹⁰² Article 89.

¹⁰³ 5 minutes on television and 10 minutes on radio for each candidate and referendum participant.

¹⁰⁴ IRI (2024) National Poll of Moldova, May-June 2024. See [here](#).

¹⁰⁵ The National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) (2023) Annual statistics. See [here](#). Fixed Internet penetration rate per 100 households (individuals) - 69.7%. In 2023, the number of active mobile internet users grew by 2,6 % to 2,902,946 million.

¹⁰⁶ Audio-Visual Council, see [here](#).

¹⁰⁷ Audio-Visual Council of Moldova. See [here](#).

¹⁰⁸ Between 2022-2023, the Commission of Exceptional Situations (CES) effort to counter disinformation resulted among others in suspending the broadcast licenses of 12 TV stations (6 in December 2022[6] and another 6 in November 202[6]) on the allegation of spreading false information.

¹⁰⁹ The latest case being of October 3, when the Intelligence and Security Service (SIS) band five Russian websites ahead of the election, with a reasoning of "national security risks".

¹¹⁰ Audio-visual council (30.08.2024) Regional public provider GRT fined 30,000 lei for not providing misleading information in a repetitive manner between June 3-17, see [here](#).

In addition, during July 2023, the Parliament voted in the first reading to decrease the maximum of potential concentrated ownership in the media market, from 35% to 25%¹¹¹. These and other measures have decreased the level of direct negative influence of “third parties” on the reporting of traditional media. However, these third parties have shown significant adaptability and capacity for transformation. Moreover, a number of portals and social media channels (especially on Telegram)¹¹² are constantly managed by Ilan Shor and pro-Kremlin business and political entities, directly or indirectly. These platforms have become a source for fake news, creating false and negative narratives on the EU and the prospects of Moldova towards European integration, aiming to manipulate voters and undermine democratic institutions, including the electoral process.

The Electoral Code mandates that within seven days of the start of the electoral period, media service providers offering election coverage must publish their terms for providing advertising space and related services to electoral competitors. These terms must be shared with both the CEC and the Audiovisual Council, with the CEC publishing them on its official platform. Throughout the electoral period, media outlets are also required to provide weekly reports to the CEC detailing income earned from political and electoral advertising for each political party, electoral bloc, or candidate.

In addition to the above-mentioned legislation and institutional framework, the AVC is responsible for overseeing the broadcasters' compliance with regulations related to reporting within the electoral period and is actively monitoring media broadcasters' activities in order to maintain fairness and a balanced approach in reporting. The AVC also addresses media-related complaints, and a significant amendment to the Electoral Code has assigned the Audiovisual Council (AVC) the responsibility of thoroughly monitoring news programs on selected broadcast media during the pre-election period. On 2 October the AVC rejected complaints from presidential candidate Renato Usatii and the Chairman of the Party of Communists, Vladimir Voronin, regarding TRM's refusal to broadcast their promotional videos. TRM declined to air the videos, citing discriminatory content toward specific social groups. The AVC upheld TRM's decision in both cases.

On 4 October, the AVC published a media monitoring report for the campaign period between 20 and 29 September 2024, including monitoring of TV broadcasters and more than 370 election related issues that have been released. The monitoring did not find any serious violations of the media legislation within the monitored period. However, several infringements related to balance in reporting and equal treatment of candidates have been detected. The AVC decided not to take any sanctions against these broadcasters and instead the Council decided to draw the attention to mentioned violations and urge these broadcasters not to repeat them.

On the other hand, the state-owned public broadcasting service of Teleradio-Moldova (TRM) as well as several influential private TV stations have been depicted by ENEMO interlocutors from opposition ranks as biased in favor of the ruling party, prior to the electoral period.

¹¹¹ Multimedia, see [here](#).

¹¹² At the time of the publishing of the report, the Telegram channels of Ilan Shor and those of a number of other persons or entities associated to him cannot be accessed, they were taken down, based on infringements of local legislation, as per the message the social media platform shows when one tries to access them.

Gender Representation

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on April 28, 1994, and the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) on 31 January 2022. Moldova has taken significant steps to combat domestic violence, including the adoption of Law no. 45 in 2007, which criminalized domestic violence, and the creation of a commission in 2022 to monitor cases of severe domestic violence. Additionally, Moldova introduced a 40% gender quota for both parliamentary and local elections through amendments to the Electoral Code, expanding the previous requirement, which applied only to parliamentary elections.

Currently, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova consists of 40% women (above the EU average), while at the local level, the share of elected women councilors is 33.3%, and women mayors make up 24%.¹¹³ Of the 16 government ministers, only 3 are women, with one serving as a vice prime minister among three others.

The President of the Republic is a woman, thus presenting a positive symbol for women representation in politics. Currently, four of the eleven presidential candidates are women (36%).

The patriarchal misconceptions, especially regarding the role of women in politics and in a leadership position are still prominent in society. This is reflected in only a slight increase in the share of elected women mayoral candidates since 2019 - 3.3% increase in villages, 5.3% in the cities.

Generally, women are well represented in lower level EMBs. Usually, the gender representation on lower level EMBs (DECs and PEBs) are in favor of women. In these elections women make up 71% of the DECs, with 60% of chairperson positions held by women.

National Minorities

In alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international legal acts on human rights, including the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities,¹¹⁴ Moldova has adopted the law “On the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and to the legal status of their organizations” ([Law No. LP382/2001](#)) in 2001. According to the law, “persons belonging to national minorities are understood as persons who reside on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, are its citizens, have ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious peculiarities

¹¹³ As of the election results of 2023 local elections.

¹¹⁴ In force for the Republic of Moldova from February 1, 1998. See the law: [here](#).

that distinguish them from the majority of the population - Moldovans - and are considered to be of another ethnic origin". Also, the Republic of Moldova ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 26 January 1993.

Based on the 2014 population and housing census, ethnic Moldovans account for just over 80% of the total population. The largest national minority groups include Ukrainians (6.6%), Gagauz (4.6%), Russians (4.1%), Bulgarians (1.9%), and Roma (0.3%). In the presidential elections there are two candidates who openly identify as ethnic Gagauz.

Organizations representing the interests of various national minorities remain active members of the Coordinating Council of Ethno-cultural Organizations, including Ukrainian, Russian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Jewish, Roma, Polish, Belarusian, German, Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, Ossetian, Lithuanian, Estonian, and Greek communities. This council operates under the Agency for Interethnic Relations, as established by Article 25 of Law No. 382/2001.

The number of ballots printed for the voting inside the country is 2,729,996. 76.6% will be printed in Romanian language, 23% in Russian. Also, there will be 3,400 ballots printed in Gagauz language, 991 - in Bulgarian, 870 - in Roma language, 115 - in Ukrainian. The ballots delivered for the polling stations serving the voters from the left bank of Transnistria will be printed equally in Romanian and Russian languages. The CEC website offers Russian and English language versions, but they are not updated consistently. Training materials for election officials are also available in minority languages, as are voter education resources.

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

The Republic of Moldova is a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and, since 2012, its domestic legislation the Law on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities guarantees people with disabilities the right to participate in all areas of life.

The CEC has set the accessibility criteria¹¹⁵ for the polling stations, as well as other subjects involved in the electoral process to ensure the electoral rights of people with disabilities. The CEC carries out continuous,¹¹⁶ assessment of the polling stations through the engagement of the permanent chairpersons of the district electoral commissions. The accessibility of buildings where the PSs are located are the responsibility of the local public authorities; however, only 1% of the buildings of the polling stations, the majority in Chisinau, are fully accessible¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁵ Regulation regarding the accessibility of the electoral process for persons with disabilities, approved by the decision of the Central Electoral Commission no. 1187/2023 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 2023, no. 347-350, art. 883.

¹¹⁶ After each election.

¹¹⁷ The CEC [website](#).

The CEC actively cooperates with civic organizations that specialize in helping citizens with special needs. This includes for instance assistance to prepare voter information materials in braille text. Through the Low Vision assistance, several polling stations in Chisinau will be equipped with special aid machines that assist voters with impaired vision to vote. Donor assistance enables the CEC to provide sign language interpretation for voters with hearing impairments, ensuring they receive voter education closer to election day and are informed about the election results.

The mission has been informed by the CEC that for the first time, in this election home-bound voting will also be provided with secret voting booths. Polling stations across the country will also display a QR code with video-audio voter educational materials.

Complaints and Appeals

The right to seek effective legal remedy is guaranteed in the electoral legislation, primarily by the Electoral Code and the CEC decision¹¹⁸. The existing legal framework categorizes election-related cases into three primary forms: disputes, administrative offenses as subject of criminal liability under the Contravention Code¹¹⁹, and Criminal Code.

As for electoral disputes, voters, candidates, the initiative group, the electoral bloc of parties, the electoral competitors can file complaints against actions, inactions and decisions of election management bodies, as well as actions, inactions of other contestants to the CEC. Electoral officials, observers, and civil society groups seeking accreditation for observers can lodge complaints against electoral bodies having infringed their rights. In such instances, similarly the decision can be challenged before a higher level EMB.

As a general rule, complaints against actions/inactions or decisions of election management bodies can be filed by a higher electoral body and then courts. In line with previous ENEMO recommendations, the amendments to the Electoral Code regulate parallel handling of complaints at EMBs and courts, so that if a complaint is sent to several electoral bodies simultaneously, the hierarchically higher body will consider it. Complaints about electoral contestants or other participants should be addressed to the electoral body that initially registered, accredited or confirmed them. For Presidential elections and referendums, the CEC is the body registering both presidential candidates and parties registered to support in favor or against the question put to referendum. Furthermore, if the complaint is directed towards both the election administration and the Court, it will be considered by the Court, unless the initial consideration procedure has not been followed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ The CEC regulation on the examination procedure of appeals during the electoral period: https://a.cec.md/ro/pentru-aprobarea-regulamentului-privind-procedura-de-examinare-a-contestatiilor--2751_106640.html

¹¹⁹ Contravention Code of Republic of Moldova: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139460&lang=ru#

¹²⁰ [The Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR Joint Opinion on the](#)

Decisions regarding complaints made by the EMBs can be challenged to the appropriate first-level court. Complaints against actions/inactions or decisions of the CEC are filed with the Court of Appeals of Chisinau. The last instance for appeals is the Supreme Court.

The timeframe for submission of complaints is within three days from the day the decision was taken, action took place, or inaction was identified.¹²¹ Positively, the timeframe for complaints adjudication is within three days but in every case no later than election day.¹²²

As of 9 October, there were seventeen cases filed with the Chisinau Court of appeals by political parties or independent candidates, challenging the CEC decisions that denied their registration or the registration of their initiative groups. Parties such as “RENAȘTERE,” “ȘANSĂ,” “VICTORIE,” and others argued that the CEC’s refusals were unlawful, arbitrary, or procedurally flawed, infringing upon their electoral rights. They sought judicial intervention to annul the CEC’s decisions and compel their inclusion in the electoral process.

In the majority of cases, the courts dismissed the challenges, finding that the CEC acted within its legal mandate and discretion. The judiciary emphasized the importance of strict adherence to procedural and substantive legal requirements for candidate and party registrations. Only in a few instances did the courts identify procedural irregularities, ordering the CEC to re-examine applications. However, subsequent reviews often led to the same outcome, with the CEC’s decisions being upheld. These cases highlight the judiciary’s deference to the electoral commission and the stringent procedural standards imposed on participants in the Moldovan electoral process.

Observers

The electoral law guarantees non-partisan observation of the election process by both domestic and international observers. Election contestants and candidates can nominate representatives or proxies.

Domestic observers can be accredited by non-governmental organizations focused on human rights or democratic values, as outlined in their statutes or internal acts. They can be accredited by the Central Election Commission (CEC) or District Electoral Councils (DECs) upon request, provided they meet certain accreditation requirements. Domestic observers accredited by the CEC can monitor the electoral process throughout the country and in all polling stations, while those accredited by DECs can only observe within their respective Electoral District. As of October 10, the CEC has accredited three domestic observer organizations with 1,176 accredited observers.

[Draft Electoral Code](#) mentions that *“This is a step in the right direction, but it should be reminded that, according to the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, “[n]either the appellants nor the authorities should be able to choose the appeal body.”* Venice Commission, Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, [CDL-AD\(2002\)023rev2-cor](#), II.3.3.c.

¹²¹ Article 95 (1) of the Electoral Code.

¹²² Article 100 (1) of the Electoral Code.

Among the accredited organizations, Promo-Lex (with 1.166 observers), a member of ENEMO, is conducting extensive observation at various levels.

International observers are accredited solely by the CEC and can only observe upon invitation from the CEC. They have the same rights as domestic observers, except for the right to submit complaints on irregularities, which is consistent with international practices. As of October 10, the CEC accredited fourteen embassies, 12 election administrations of foreign states, and 13 international organizations, totaling 278 accredited observers.

Organizations seeking accreditation as observers must file their requests up to seven days before election day. The relevant EMB must make a decision within five days for domestic observers and within ten days for international observers, but no later than election day. Decisions to deny registration or accreditation must be justified and can be challenged at the Chisinau Court of Appeals in the case of the CEC and at the CEC in the case of DEC's.

ENEMO observers have not faced any restrictions or issues in performing their observations, nor were there reported cases of similar restrictions by domestic observers.

About ENEMO

The European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) is an international nongovernmental organization that represents a network of national nongovernmental civic organizations founded on September 29, 2001, in Opatija, Croatia. It consists of 21 leading domestic monitoring organizations from 17 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. ENEMO seeks to support the international community's interest in promoting democracy in the region by assessing electoral processes and the political environment and offering accurate and impartial observation reports. ENEMO IEOMs use international benchmarks and standards for democratic elections to evaluate the electoral process and the host country's legal framework. ENEMO and all its member organizations have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations. Each ENEMO observer signed the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. ENEMO member organizations have monitored more than 250 national elections and trained more than 250,000 observers.

To date, ENEMO has organized 41 international election observation missions to 11 countries: Hungary 2024, Municipal Elections; Moldova 2023, Local Elections; Serbia 2022, Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections; Hungary 2022, Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2021, Local Elections; Georgia 2021, Local Elections; Moldova 2021, Parliamentary Elections; Albania 2021, Parliamentary Elections; Moldova 2020, Presidential Elections; Montenegro 2020, Parliamentary Elections; Serbia 2020, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2020, Local Elections; Moldova 2019, Local Elections; Ukraine 2019, Early Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2019, Presidential Elections; Moldova 2018-19, Parliamentary Elections; Armenia 2018, Early Parliamentary Elections; Moldova 2016, Presidential Elections; Ukraine 2015, Regular Local Elections; Ukraine 2014, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2014, Presidential Elections; Ukraine 2013 – re-run of Parliamentary Elections 2012 in 5 MECs; Kosovo 2013, Local Elections, first round; Ukraine 2012, Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2011, Re – run of Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2010, Parliamentary Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2010, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2010, Presidential Elections, second round; Ukraine 2010, Presidential Elections, first round; Kosovo 2009, Local Elections; Moldova 2009, Parliamentary Elections; Georgia 2008, Presidential Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2007, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2007, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2006, Local Elections in Poltava, Kirovograd and Chernihiv; Ukraine 2006, Parliamentary Elections; Kazakhstan 2005, Presidential Elections; Albania 2005, Parliamentary Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2005, Presidential Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2005, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2004, Presidential Elections, second round re-run; Ukraine 2004, Presidential Elections.

ENEMO member organizations are: Center for Civic Initiatives CCI, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Center for Democratic Transition – CDT, Montenegro; Centre for Monitoring and Research – CeMI, Montenegro; Center for Free Elections and Democracy – CeSID, Serbia; GONG, Croatia; International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy – ISFED, Georgia; KRIIK Association, Albania; Citizens Association MOST, Macedonia; Promo- LEX, Moldova; OPORA, Ukraine; Society for Democratic Culture SDC, Albania; Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center (TIAC), Armenia; Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Center (EMDS), Azerbaijan; Belarussian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Belarus; FSCI, Kazakhstan; Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), Kosovo; Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, Kyrgyzstan; Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), Serbia; Obcianske OKO (OKO), Slovakia; Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), Ukraine.